



ST OLYMPIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

POTSDAM, NEW YORK 13676

ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA
DIOCESE OF NY AND NJ



**Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshippers.**

Join us for prayer and fellowship.

**Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday at 10 am
Great Vespers are held every Saturday evening at 5 pm
Services are primarily in English.**

Next Services

Saturday, July 14th

**Great Vespers
5:00 pm**

Sunday, July 15th

**Matins
9:30 am
(Summer hours)**

**Divine Liturgy
10:00 am**

at

**St. Olympia Chapel
123 Main Street
Potsdam, NY**

All welcome!

This Sunday was a very special one for our parish. We welcomed Fr. Peter as our first resident priest! Fr. Peter has been serving us on an interim basis while he was being transferred to the OCA, Diocese of New York/New Jersey. We are most grateful to Archbishop Michael for his care and generosity in enabling this and assigning Fr. Peter to our parish. Fr. Peter and Matushka Mary have moved to Potsdam and now live on Elm Street a block away from our chapel.

Fr. Peter and Mat. Mary look forward to visiting us, blessing our houses, praying with us and helping us in any way possible. Please welcome them and help them to get to know you. He has already begun to visit hospitals and nursing homes. Please forward names of anyone in hospitals, hospice, shut in or incarcerated. This is truly a blessing. Glory to God!



Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8

*Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor.
It is included here by permission.*

In the first eight chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, we see our Lord's birth, His Baptism in the Jordan, and the temptations in the desert which prepared Him for the beginning of His public ministry---which appeared at first to be a string of unbroken successes. But now, in chapter 9 we see the first shadows of the gathering storm of opposition which will culminate in His crucifixion. In this 9th chapter Jesus faces four accusations. In today's Gospel, Matthew 9:1-8, He's accused of blasphemy; in verses 10-13 He's accused of immorality because He shared a meal "with tax collectors and sinners;" in verses 14-17 He's accused of slackness in piety in terms of how, when, and why He and His disciples fasted; and in verses 31-34, as a result of His healing "a man mute and demon-possessed," He's accused of being in league with the devil. And in each case, what gets Jesus slandered and bad-mouthed is not bad behavior, wicked deeds, but good behavior, good deeds.

So is the lesson, "No good deed ever goes unpunished"? Perhaps. But it also teaches us what we as Christians should expect from the world around us for saying and doing what is right, good, godly and loving, especially when what we're saying and doing runs flatly contrary to the customs and expectations of the world. Despite the fact that our Lord warn us in John 15:8, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you," we keep expecting the world around us---a world separated by sin from God and the things of God, you'll recall---to recognize and reward, or at least respect, righteousness and right behavior; and we get all surprised, puzzled, hurt, and angry, when the world doesn't even respect, much less reward, our best efforts.

And yes, the world does babble endlessly about "love." But what kind of love? The word the New Testament uses most often for "love" is agape, meaning an unconquerable good will that serves the highest good of another. How different from our over-use of "love!" Think about it: "I love pizza," means something quite different from the, "I love you," we whisper to our beloved; but we use the same word for both. Well, as a friend of mine likes to say that "Love is as love does;" and that neatly expresses the fact that "love," especially agape-love, is understood and has real meaning only when it's demonstrated. Certainly that's what God's love for us is like: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son... But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." In 1 Corinthians 13:7, the apostle Paul continues that theme as he writes that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things," and concludes with the powerful words, "Love never fails [never ends, never runs out]."

Now bearing all that mind, let's look at Jesus healing the paralytic and see how love is demonstrated. Firstly, love bears all things. The men in this story broke the rules; they went against the religious norms and expectations of society because they associated with a "sinner." Their friend's paralysis was seen by most folks in that society as God's punishment of him for some grave sin, God's judgment upon him for his supposed unrighteousness. Quite possibly the paralytic himself believed that he had committed some grave sin against God, even though he couldn't figure out what it was. His friends, though, deliberately chose not to desert him. The men also broke a cultural rule: they got personally and actively involved in their friend's problem. Their society was similar to ours. People didn't get involved in the lives and problems of others unless they were asked, and then only with great hesitation. But these men demonstrated how love bears all things when they literally bore their friend and placed him in front of Jesus in order to be healed. And Jesus shows his love by forgiving the paralytic's sin, anticipating how He would atone for that sin by bearing it on the cross. And the point is clear: true and godly love dares to take risks in serving others, including the risk of society's disapproval. True and godly love bears with the person in need of help and bears up under criticism, opprobrium, nasty gossip, and/or being ostracized. True and godly love is not for the coward but for the courageous, because in pursuit of its goal of loving service, it really does bear all things and pushes ahead anyway.

Secondly, love believes all things. The paralytic's friends believed that Jesus would heal their friend, even if the paralytic himself might not have believed. Their love for their friend empowered them to act in faith, to take the risk of placing their trust in Jesus. And this, remember, is well before our Lord's glorious third-day Resurrection, well before they could have any solid reason for believing that this Jesus is the Son of God. Nonetheless, it was their faith as much as their arms that carried the paralytic into the presence of Jesus. And mark you: the faith of the paralytic's friends was in direct contrast to the skepticism of the Pharisees and experts in the Law of Moses, who certainly did not believe Jesus was God, who didn't believe that he could really heal people, and who absolutely didn't believe that Jesus should or could forgive sins. But despite their skepticism and outright unbelief, the power of Jesus to heal both physical and spiritual ills remained undiminished. Here again, the point is clear: neither the love nor the power nor the willingness of Jesus to act in love are or can be limited by huge problems and/or human skepticism. Remember our Lord's answer to the father of the epileptic boy. After outlining his son's problem, he said to Jesus, "If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Our Lord's response? "'If you can?' Believe! All things are possible to him who believes."

And note how Jesus believed all things by valuing and acting in love to heal the whole person. He loved the paralytic enough not to give him a Band-Aid cure, but to heal him fully and completely. And in so doing, Jesus too broke the rules of His society because He flat-out ignored the expectations and notions of the religious leaders and scholars, choosing to do what was right rather than what was expected; and here Jesus exemplifies how not to be that person described in James 4:17, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin."

And that leads us, thirdly, to how love hopes all things. You and I tend to take it for granted; but God's forgiveness of our sin is a gift of infinite worth, given us for the sake of Christ and His sufferings, death and Resurrection. Unlike the people of the Old Covenant, who could but hope that they were forgiven, you and I can know for certain that we're forgiven, because "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness." Still, I suspect that the paralytic and his friends were disappointed that first words out of our Lord's mouth were not, "Zap, you're healed!" but "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Jesus did not immediately heal him and make him walk again. And aren't there times in your life and in mine when we too are disappointed about how God has answered our prayers, because we haven't yet grasped and understood until the full extent of what God has done? In our pride and self-worship, we think that we know best what is best, and that the tiny little moment in time that we can see is that truly "big picture" which only God can see.

Yet their love enabled these men to keep hoping even in the midst of their disappointment, and to become the embodiment of the dynamic in Psalm 40:1, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry." Scripture always urges us to trust that although God's timing is not our timing, His love is constant. Psalm 37:5-6, for example, tells us, "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday." And Proverbs 3:5-6 urges us, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him [let Him take the lead], and He will make your paths straight." In his book *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis pictures the senior devil Screwtape describing to his nephew, the junior devil Wormwood, what fun it is to watch humans abandon hope and give up just as God's help is coming to them. But the friends of the paralytic didn't quit; and in response to their faith, their hope, and their love, Jesus gives to the paralytic a greater and more complete healing that any of them could've imagined.

And note how, "when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, Who had given such power to men." What people needed then and still need today is not, first and foremost, religious scholarship, abstract theology, or religious rituals, no matter how pretty. What people need and, deep down, really want is a religion and a faith that gives them a true vision of the grace, the power, and the love of God, and changes their lives and makes a difference. And it is when others encounter in Christ's ones that love which bears all things, believes all things, endures all things, they're enabled to see beyond the rules and discover a loving, powerful, forgiving God. Is that what others see in you and in me today?

Forthcoming Events

Parish Food Drive:

Please bring canned food for donation to Helping Hands food pantry on **Sunday July 15th or Sunday, July 22nd**. Particularly needed items:

- fruit juice
- canned tuna
- canned chicken
- mac and cheese
- jellies and jams
- spaghetti sauce
- peanut butter
- laundry soap
- dish soap

Blessing of Vehicles:

This short, simple prayer service reminds us that we, and our vehicles, are in God's hands. This is the season of much travel. Come bring your cars, bicycles, motorcycles, ATVs...

Park across from the chapel on **Sunday, July 22nd**. The blessing service will be held outside immediately after the Divine Liturgy at **11:30 am**.

Bring neighbors and friends--all are welcome to receive this blessing!